



SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

BURNLEY TOWN HALL

Thursday, 7th February, 2019 at 6.30 pm

PRESENT

MEMBERS

Councillors A Tatchell (Chair), M Brindle (Vice-Chair), T Commis, I Emo, D Ferrier, J Greenwood, M Johnstone, S Khan, G Lishman, M Lishman and P Reynolds

OFFICERS

Lukman Patel	– Chief Operating Officer
Asad Mushtaq	– Head of Finance and Property
Alison McEwan	– Democracy Officer
Rob Dobson	– Head of Policy and Engagement
Simon Peet	– Finance Manager
Richard Brown	– Community Safety Project Officer

IN ATTENDANCE

Councillors L Pate and M Townsend

38. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Foster and Malik.

39. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 10th December 2018 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

40. Notice of Key Decisions and Private Meetings

IT WAS AGREED

That the Notice of Key Decisions and Private Meetings be noted.

41. Community Safety Annual Report

Richard Brown introduced the Annual Community Safety update report. He added that the Community Safety Partnership had just been informed that a funding bid to deliver awareness raising sessions about 'County Lines' issues in Burnley schools.

Members asked the following questions:

- Would the funding to deliver initiatives re County Lines link with other organisations, including care leavers, which is a significant and vulnerable group in East Lancashire? Yes, the intervention will focus on vulnerable groups, with links established via the LCC Child and Family Wellbeing Service. There may be the opportunity to obtain further funding to widen the scope. Referrals for those leaving care are sometimes received into the Transforming Lives scheme.
- Burglary is listed as a priority for the Community Safety Partnership – often the reasons behind acquisitive crime are drug related. There are many initiatives in place through partnership working. For example Transforming Lives scheme, and work with Inspire substance misuse service.
- The formation of the Community Alcohol Partnership was welcomed. Members were concerned by the 'hidden' problem drinking related to older people. Alongside emergency services and medical professionals, referrals were received into the Transforming Lives programme – a multi-agency approach to alcohol, drug and mental health issues.
- Problems related to spice and 'legal highs'. Ongoing work continues to identify emerging threats and trends, and also to identify the source of drugs.
- Issues around homelessness and sleeping rough that are often linked to drug and alcohol issues. A coordinated approach with Police, Housing colleagues and drug and alcohol agencies to provide advice and guidance to rough sleepers. Also a new webpage (<https://www.burnley.gov.uk/winterhelp>) launched on the Council's website to provide advice for members of the public on how they can help/signpost to appropriate services.
- Any initiatives re dependency on prescribed drugs? This would usually be a CCG/GP issue. However, individuals could be referred into the Transforming Lives scheme for assistance.

IT WAS AGREED

That the report be noted.

42. Half Yearly Performance report

In introducing the half year performance report, Rob Dobson added some information from the Quarter 3 data which had recently been received.

The latest data showed that 88% of calls were answered on time, against the contact centre gold standard of 80%. This was due to staff receiving additional training, allowing them to

deal with a broader range of calls. Also calls can be cross answered by the Burnley and Pendle teams, to deal with peaks and troughs in demand.

Performance in the Development Control team has been strong in recent quarters. The latest Q3 data does show a dip in performance regards timely processing of 'other' applications; both major and minor applications continue to be processed on time. had shown a dip in Q3. Planning staff are implementing a new computer system and there had also been staff vacancies, as well as some significant major applications to deal with. The dip is expected to be temporary.

Members considered the following:

- Where targets were consistently (over)achieved, would there be any merit in stretching the targets, or could we create our own performance measures? The targets were in most cases set according to national benchmarks or historical performance. If the council changed the measures, it would be unable to compare its performance against other authorities.
- That the authority should be congratulated on its reduction in sickness absence amongst staff, and also for being awarded the IIP Gold award against more stringent targets.
- Within the 88% of calls answered on target, was there a measure to show how many of these calls were resolved, rather than being passed around or left unresolved? This data is not collected, but the number of calls abandoned by frustrated customers is currently very low – only 1%.
- Whether there was any information on queries answered by email? The council has been trying to discourage contact by email, instead trying to direct traffic through the forms on the website which direct comments, queries and complaints direct to the correct team. This improves the accuracy of information held. The target for complaints received through the web form is for acknowledgement within 5 working days and resolution within 20 working days. Rob Dobson will forward the information to members.

43. Draft Strategic Plan

In presenting the report, Rob Dobson informed Members that there had not been a great deal of change to the Strategic Plan, but that the ambition to become a University Town had been reflected in the document.

Members considered the following:

- Current and potential future budgetary and funding pressures and whether there should be more reference to these in the Strategic Plan. Lukman Patel commented that the Strategic Plan was an overarching document, and should be considered alongside the Council's financial planning documents such as the Strategic Risk Register and the Medium Term Financial Strategy which take account of financial challenges.

IT WAS AGREED

That the report be noted.

44. Revenue Budget Monitoring Quarter 3

Asad Mushtaq presented the report which showed that the Council's revenue expenditure was on target as at 31st December 2018.

IT WAS AGREED

That the report be noted.

45. Capital Budget Monitoring Quarter 3

Asad Mushtaq presented a report outlining the most recent capital budget position.

Cllr Margaret Lishman commented that there had previously been a separate Budget Scrutiny Panel, and that in combining the committees Budget Scrutiny did not get the focus it deserved.

IT WAS AGREED

That the report be noted.

46. Revenue Budget 2019/20

Asad Mushtaq presented the report setting out the Council's proposed budget for 2019/20.

Members considered the following:

- There was little public understanding of how local authority budgets were constructed and funded. Could the Council's Communications Team do some work to increase awareness.

IT WAS AGREED

That the report be noted.

47. Medium Term Financial Strategy

Asad Mushtaq presented the Council's medium Term Financial Strategy, and drew Members attention to the extended timescale of the report – now covering 5 years.

IT WAS AGREED

That the report be noted.

48. Capital Budget 2019/20 and Capital Investment Programme 2019/20 - 2023/24

Asad Mushtaq presented the report outlining the Council's proposed Capital Budget for 2019/20, and Capital Investment Programme to 2023/24.

IT WAS AGREED

That the report be noted.

49. Treasury Management Strategy & Prudential Borrowing

Asad Mushtaq introduced the report setting out how the Council will manage its investments and loans.

IT WAS AGREED

That the report be noted.

50. Scrutiny Review Groups

The Chair presented a draft report from the Dementia Scrutiny Review Group. The Committee endorsed the report for submission to the Executive.

Going forward the Chair outlined plans to revisit the Manchester Road Railway Station Scrutiny Review to measure progress made.

A suggestion for a future review group was made. It was suggested that a review group could map provision of services that offered assistance to those in need in the borough, and how those services could be accessed. This could inform some awareness raising work around services available.

51. Work Programme 2018/19

Alison McEwan explained that the Work Plan was there to inform Members of items due to come to the Committee, and was added to as the year went on. At the next meeting the Committee would consider the outline Work Plan for 2019/20.